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DE WITT'S ACTING PLAYS.

(Number 358.)

HICK'RY FARM.

A Comedy-Drama of New England Life.

IN TWO ACTS.

By EDWIN M. STERN.

TOGETHER WITH

A Description of the Costumes—Cast of the Characters—Entrances
and Exits—Relative Positions of the Performers on the
Stage—and the whole of the Stage Business.

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| | M. | F. | | M. | F. |
|--|----|----|--|----|----|
| 141. Absent Minded, Ethiopian farce, 1 act..... | 3 | 1 | 124. Deaf as a Post, Ethiopian sketch.... | 2 | |
| 73. African Box, burlesque, 2 scenes.... | 5 | | 111. Deeds of Darkness, Ethiopian extravaganza, 1 act..... | 6 | 1 |
| 107. Africanus Bluebeard, musical Ethiopian burlesque, 1 scene..... | 6 | 2 | 139. Desperate Situation (A), farce, 1 sc. 5 | 2 | |
| 113. Ambition, farce, 2 scenes..... | 7 | | 50. Draft (The), sketch, 2 scenes..... | 6 | |
| 133. Awful Plot (An) Ethiopian farce, 1a. | 3 | 1 | 61. Dutchman's Ghost, 1 scene..... | 4 | 1 |
| 43. Baby Elephant, sketch, 2 scenes.... | 7 | 1 | 95. Dutch Justice, laughable sketch, 1 scene..... | 11 | |
| 42. Bad Whiskey, Irish sketch, 1 scene. | 2 | 1 | 67. Editor's Troubles, farce, 1 scene... 6 | | |
| 79. Barney's Courtship, musical interlude, 1 act..... | 1 | 2 | 4. Eh? What is it? sketch..... | 4 | 1 |
| 40. Big Mistake, sketch, 1 scene..... | 4 | | 136. Election Day, Ethiopian farce, 2 sc. 6 | 1 | |
| 6. Black Chap from Whitechapel, Negro piece..... | 4 | | 93. Elopement (The), farce, 2 scenes... 4 | 1 | |
| 10. Black Chemist, sketch, 1 scene.... | 3 | | 52. Excise Trials, sketch, 1 scene..... | 10 | 1 |
| 11. Black-Ey'd William, sketch, 2 scenes | 4 | 1 | 25. Fellow that Looks like Me, interlude, 1 scene..... | 2 | 1 |
| 146. Black Forrest (The), Ethiopian farce, 1 act..... | 2 | 1 | 88. First Night (The), Dutch farce, 1 act | 4 | 2 |
| 110. Black Magician (De), Ethiopian comicality..... | 4 | 2 | 51. Fisherman's Luck, sketch, 1 scene. | 2 | |
| 126. Black Statue (The), Negro farce.... | 4 | 2 | 152. Fun in a Cooper's Shop, Ethiopian sketch..... | 6 | |
| 127. Blinks and Jinks, Ethiopian sketch, | 3 | 1 | 106. Gambinus, King of Lager Beer, Ethiopian burlesque, 2 scenes.... | 8 | 1 |
| 128. Bobolino, the Black Bandit, Ethiopian musical farce, 1 act..... | 2 | 1 | 83. German Emigrant (The), sketch, 1 sc. 2 | 2 | |
| 120. Body Snatchers (The), Negro sketch, 2 scenes..... | 3 | 1 | 77. Getting Square on the Call Boy, sketch, 1 scene..... | 3 | |
| 78. Bogus Indian, sketch, 4 scenes.... | 5 | 2 | 17. Ghost (The), Sketch, 1 act..... | 2 | |
| 89. Bogus Talking Machine (The), farce, 1 scene..... | 4 | | 58. Ghost in a Pawn Shop, sketch, 1 sc. 4 | | |
| 24. Bruised and Cured, sketch, 1 scene. | 2 | | 31. Glycerine Oil, sketch, 2 scenes.... | 3 | |
| 108. Charge of the Hash Brigade, comic Irish musical sketch..... | 2 | 2 | 20. Going for the Cup, interlude..... | 4 | |
| 148. Christmas Eve in the South, Ethiopian farce, 1 act..... | 6 | 2 | 82. Good Night's Rest, sketch, 1 scene. | 3 | |
| 35. Coal Heaver's Revenge, Negro sketch, 1 scene..... | 6 | | 130. Go and get Tight, Ethiopian sketch, 1 scene..... | 6 | |
| 112. Coming Man (The), Ethiopian sketch, 2 scenes..... | 3 | 1 | 86. Gripsack, sketch, 1 scene..... | 3 | |
| 41. Cremation, sketch, 2 scenes..... | 8 | 1 | 70. Guide to the Stage, sketch..... | 3 | |
| 144. Crowded Hotel (The), sketch, 1 sc.. | 4 | 1 | 61. Happy Couple, 1 scene..... | 2 | 1 |
| 140. Cupid's Frolics, sketch, 1 scene.... | 5 | 1 | 142. Happy Uncle Rufus, Ethiopian musical sketch, 1 scene..... | 1 | 1 |
| 12. Daguerreotypes, sketch, 1 scene.... | 3 | | 23. Hard Times, extravaganza, 1 scene. | 5 | 1 |
| 53. Damon and Pythias, burlesque, 2 sc. 5 | 1 | | 118. Helen's Funny Babies, burlesque, 1 act..... | 6 | |
| 24. Darkey's Stratagem, sketch, 1 scene | 3 | 1 | 3. Hemmed In, sketch..... | 3 | 1 |
| 131. Darkey Sleep Walker (The), Ethiopian sketch, 1 scene..... | 3 | 1 | 48. High Jack, the Heeler, sketch, 1 sc. 6 | | |
| | | | 68. Hippotheatron, sketch..... | 9 | |
| | | | 150. How to Pay the Rent, farce, 1 scene | 6 | |
| | | | 71. In and Out, sketch, 1 scene..... | 2 | |
| | | | 123. Intelligence Office (The), Ethiopian sketch, 1 scene..... | 2 | 1 |

HICK'RY FARM.

A COMEDY-DRAMA OF NEW ENGLAND LIFE.

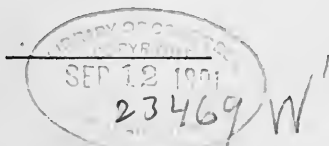
IN TWO ACTS.

AS PRESENTED AT THE LEXINGTON AVE. OPERA HOUSE, NEW YORK.

By EDWIN M. STERN.

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A DESCRIPTION OF THE COSTUMES—CAST OF THE CHARACTERS—EN-
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NEW YORK :

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CHARACTERS.

EZEKIEL FORTUNE, a New England farmer.

URIAH SKINNER, a miser.

GILBERT DARKWOOD, handsome and unscrupulous.

JACK NELSON.

LAWRENCE McKEEGAN, an alderman from the city.

DETECTIVE RANKIN.

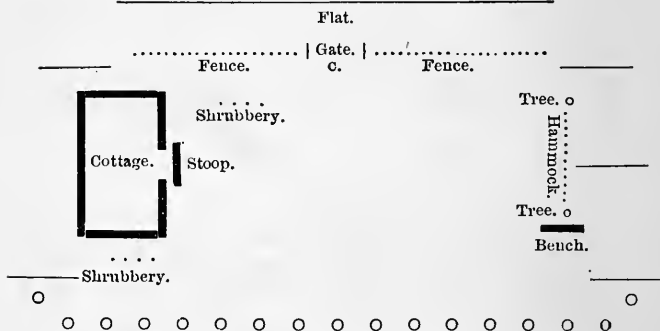
TWO CONSTABLES.

JESSIE FORTUNE, pretty and unsophisticated.

MRS. PRISCILLA DODGE, a susceptible widow.

TIME IN PLAYING—ONE HOUR AND THIRTY MINUTES.

SCENERY.



ACT I.—Landscape backing on flat. Rustic fence running across stage in 4th grooves, with practicable gate, c. Set cottage R. 1 E. to R. 3 E., with low stoop and practicable door. Trees L. 2 E. and L. 3 E., with hammock swung between. Rustic bench or seats under tree L. 2 E.

ACT II.—A large, poorly-furnished room, with cracked or rough-boarded walls and appearance of dilapidation. Fireplace, with smouldering fire, L. Doors R. 2 E., L. 1 E., and c. in flat. Plain table with chairs R.; one or two chairs L.

COSTUMES.

FORTUNE.—Act I.—Dark-colored or gray pantaloons and vest of well-to-do farmer; no coat; white shirt, with turn-down collar; substantial shoes; gray bald wig, throat whiskers to match; straw or light-colored soft hat. Act II.—Clothes same as Act I, with addition of coat, but presenting a somewhat worn and faded appearance; no hat; shoes, as before.

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SKINNER.—Act I.—Well-worn suit, style similar to FORTUNE's; rather high-crowned dark straw hat; sack coat; farmer's shoes; smooth face; wig, slightly gray and bald. Act II.—Clothes same as Act I, with addition of gray overcoat and dark felt hat.

DARKWOOD.—Act I.—Stylish summer walking suit. Light derby or straw hat, cane, gloves, fancy shirt, with standing collar, and cuffs to match; dark mustache; handsome jewelry. Act II.—Handsome dark overcoat, with fur collar and cuffs; dark pants, high silk hat.

JACK.—Act I.—Plain mixed business suit; low-crowned felt or straw hat; white shirt, with rolling collar; plain white cuffs, no jewelry. Act II.—Plain, dark, worn business suit; dark felt hat, woolen comforter.

McKEEGAN.—Act I.—Rather loud striped or fancy business suit; striped shirt, with rolling collar, and cuffs to match; high-crowned soft hat; red bald wig, with reddish beard and mustache; heavy cane. Act II.—Dark travelling suit, with cape overcoat and flat-crowned derby hat; white shirt, rolling collar, and cuffs; otherwise as in Act I.

RANKIN.—Act II.—Stylish dark suit, with heavy pea-jacket or overcoat; derby hat; dark mustache.

CONSTABLES.—Plain dark suits, with overcoats and hats.

JESSIE.—Act I.—Simple country summer walking dress, with appropriate hat or bonnet, changing in last part of act to darker travelling costume, with hooded cloak or water-proof. Act II.—Dark travelling costume, with sack or wrap: outside wrap is to be removed during act.

Mrs. DODGE.—Act I.—Dressed in rather bad taste, with showy materials; bonnet, gloves, and parasol; these last are removed during act. Act II.—Travelling costume; with bonnet and wraps, part of which are dispensed with during the act.

PROPERTIES.

Act I.—Money (coin) for DARKWOOD; milk-pails for FORTUNE; book and flowers for JESSIE; parasol for Mrs. DODGE; photo for DARKWOOD; purse and earrings for Mrs. DODGE; satchel and letter (unsealed) for JESSIE; lantern for FORTUNE; pitcher of water for McKEEGAN; spectacles for FORTUNE.

Act II.—Hat and muffler for JACK; flute for FORTUNE; watch for RANKIN; handkerchief for do.; pistol for DARKWOOD; pistol for RANKIN.

SYNOPSIS.

GILBERT DARKWOOD, a blackleg from the city, has discovered that a projected railroad intends erecting a station on ZEKIEL FORTUNE's place, Hickory Farm. As the railroad will pay a very large price for the farm, DARKWOOD plots with SKINNER to obtain the title-deed from FORTUNE, dispossess him, and reap the profits of the sale. SKINNER, who has a long-standing grudge against FORTUNE, agrees to steal the deed. DARKWOOD discovers that FORTUNE's only daughter, JESSIE, is the little country girl whose head he had turned the preceding winter in the city, and induces her to elope with him. Before leaving, DARKWOOD obtains the title-deed, and also manages to rob the Mayville Bank (which contains all of FORTUNE's savings), and to cast suspicion of the robbery upon JACK NELSON, FORTUNE's adopted

son, who is in love with JESSIE. In the second act, DARKWOOD, who has sold FORTUNE's house over his head, appears and demands the rent for the poor hovel that FORTUNE and JACK now occupy. SKINNER, who has repented his part in the affair that has brought such misfortune on his old neighbors, threatens to expose DARKWOOD. A New York detective arrives, and, with SKINNER's help, obtains evidence that DARKWOOD robbed the bank. JESSIE returns. JACK NELSON's name is cleared of suspicion, and the title-deed of the farm is restored to old FORTUNE. DARKWOOD is shot by the detective for resisting arrest. The love passages of Alderman McKEEGAN and MRS. DODGE afford a most humorous accompaniment to the drama.

SYNOPSIS OF INCIDENTS FOR HOUSE PROGRAMMES, Etc.

ACT I.—HICK'RY FARM HOUSE.—Darkwood's plot—Skinner tempted—Money! Gold!—Zekiel appears—"Be you Ann Maria's boy?"—Fortune's reminiscences—The deed must be stolen!—Hard cider—Aunt Priscilla's love—The alderman's brogue—"Dear departed Hezekiah"—Jessie's secret—"Then you still love me?"—"Larry McKeegan's courtin'"—The "widdy" succumbs—"Zekiel's fav'rit' song"—McKeegan's ghost—Jack Nelson makes a discovery—Jessie has gone!—"Heaven help me!"—Zekiel's prayer.

ACT II.—IN FORTUNE'S SHANTY.—Zekiel's misfortunes—The rent collector—Darkwood's insult—"Villain, you lie!"—Skinner's remorse—The New York detective—The bank robbery—Darkwood threatens—Jessie returns—The alderman married—"Sure it's a darlint little woife she is"—Zekiel's happiness—"Gosh! I ain't felt so gol-darned happy sinct I wuz a boy!"—A trap for Darkwood—Jack and Jessie re-united—Priscilla pacified—Darkwood at bay—"Stand aside, as you value your lives!"—The detective fires—"You've done for me this time!"—Zekiel's forgiveness—Old Hick'ry farm restored.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R. means Right of Stage, facing the Audience; L. Left; C. Centre; R. C. Right of Centre; L. C. Left of Centre; D. F. Door in the Flat, or Scene running across the back of the Stage; C. D. F. Centre Door in the Flat; R. D. F. Right Door in the Flat; L. D. F. Left Door in the Flat; R. D. Right Door; L. D. Left Door; 1 E. First Entrance; 2 E. Second Entrance; U. E. Upper Entrance; 1, 2 or 3 G. First, Second or Third Groove.


R.

R. C.

C.

L. C.

L.

 The reader is supposed to be upon the stage facing the audience

HICK'RY FARM.

SCENE.—*Exterior of FORTUNE'S place. SKINNER and DARKWOOD discovered sitting on rustic seat, L.*

DARKWOOD. Skinner, the facts of the case are simply these: The New Hampshire, Vermont, and Northern Railroad intend running a branch through this village on to Dunn's Bridge. I have it on the best authority that they intend building a permanent station in this very town. They have been surveying the lay of the land for some time past, and have at last arranged to run their tracks along this road. Their depot will be built on this very spot.

SKINNER. What! on Zeke Fortune's place? Why, Zeke's in luck! They'll pay a big price for it now, won't they?

DARK. Yes; inasmuch as this is the most desirable location in the neighborhood for a station, it is likely that they will pay almost any price asked.

SKIN. What do you think, now, they'd offer for the place?

DARK. The minimum sum would be fifty thousand dollars.

SKIN. Fifty thousand dollars! Fifty thousand dollars! Zeke's in luck! Zeke's in luck! Ah, but he was born lucky—been lucky ever since I knew him. Every thing I touch goes wrong; every thing he takes hold on gits along! Me'n him loved the same girl; of course she married him. Luck! luck! his cursed luck! Now he's in a fair way o' makin' fifty thousand dollars! I never saw half that much.

DARK. But listen to me. It is in your power to make as much, and more.

SKIN. In my power to make fifty thousand dollars! (*eagerly*) Stranger, how, how?

DARK. Very simply. If you and I owned this place instead of this man Fortune, the railroad would have to purchase it from us instead of him?

SKIN. Yes; but how can we git possession of it? Zeke Fortune swears he'll never sell the place for any one else to live in. He's attached to the place ever since his wife died.

DARK. But if we could obtain it without buying it?

SKIN. Obtain it without buying it! Why, how?

DARK. If I can obtain possession of the title-deed, I can make it appear that he has transferred the house to you for a certain sum of money. I can forge a receipt. Do you comprehend?

SKIN. But how to git hold of the deed?

DARK. It is for that reason that I confide in you. You are known at

the house, and can therefore more easily lay your hands on the document.

SKIN. And you say it'll be a lot o' money in my pocket? How much, say?

DARK. Probably thirty or forty thousand dollars.

SKIN. (*down L. to C.*). Thirty or forty thousand dollars! A heap o' money! A heap o' money! But, see here, young stranger, I don't know you. You come to me yester' night, and says you, "Old man, I've got a job on foot, and you are just the man to do it." You tell me now there's money in it—thirty or forty thousand dollars; a big heap o' money for a poor man like me. But how am I to know that after I've done your dirty work you'll keep your word?

DARK. (*down C.*). To show you that I mean what I say, here is a voucher. (*hands money.*)

SKIN. (*greedily clutching it*). Money! Gold! Good money! How much? Five, ten—twenty-five dollars! Good money—all mine!

DARK. And much more, if you succeed in obtaining the title-deed of the house.

SKIN. You swear you'll give me more when I git the deed? More money?

DARK. You shall have as much as you want.

SKIN. Stranger, ye may be rich, but ye never could give me all the gold I want. Gold! I love it better than mother, father, sister, or brother. Gold! I love it better than life itself. Sweet, beautiful gold! (*contemplates coin in hand.*)

DARK. (*aside*). By Jove! I'm having an easier time than I thought for. This old miser would sell himself, if need be, for money. He will make a useful tool. Once I hold the title-deed of that house in my possession, success is assured. The railway will pay at least a hundred thousand dollars for the property—enough to keep me in clover for some time to come. To avoid my presence causing this man Fortune any suspicion, it would be well to use some caution. An idea! (*aloud*) Skinner, how would it do to pass me off for your nephew from the city, son of your sister, you know? It will keep them off the scent.

SKIN. Pass you off for my nephew? Likely, likely! But—

DARK. Pshaw now, no buts. You'll do it now, won't you?

SKIN. Do it? Hm! Yes, ef ye make it worth my while.

DARK. (*aside*). Confound the old fool! he's bleeding me like a leech. (*aloud*) You know I ask you to do nothing free gratis. Here's a proof of what I say. (*hands money.*)

SKIN. (*eagerly*). Money!

FORTUNE (*outside*). Whoa now! Stand still there, Nora!

SKIN. Zeke's voice! He's comin' this way.

DARK. Remember, Skinner, I am your nephew. (*crosses to L.*)

Enter, C., FORTUNE, with milkpail in each hand.

FORTUNE (*speaking as he enters*). Wall, I'll be gol-darned ef that 'ere brindle ain't the skeeriest crittur in Christendom; she all but stepped into the pail, by gracious. (*seeing SKINNER and DARKWOOD*) Wall, I'll be gol-darned ef it ain't 'Riah Skinner himself! How be ye, 'Riah? (*to DARKWOOD*) How be ye, stranger?

SKIN. (*L. C.*). My nephew, Zek'l, from the city—Ann Maria's boy.

DARK. (*L.*). Mr. Fortune, I'm pleased to know you.

FORT. (*C.*). Wall, I declare to goodness gracious me, be you Ann Maria's boy? Why, man, I know'd ye afore ye war born! an' I'll be

gol-darned ef ye ain't the livin' pictur' of yer mother. A likely gal was Ann Maria. She was my Sund'y-go-to-meetin' gal onct, was Ann Maria. My, how she'n me did the sparkin' act! That was afore I met Lucy Jane Snyder.

SKIN. Yes, an' cut me out o' marryin' her.

FORT. 'Riah never could get over the way I spliced Lucy Jane right under his nose. We war great swells in them days, 'Riah'n me, I tell ye. I'll be gol-darned ef we didn't burst more hearts'n thar was gals.

DARK. Yes, my mother has often told me of the good times she had during her youth. You were one of her favorites.

FORT. Wall, I tell ye, young man, I was a mighty smart lookin' chap w'en I was young, an' it took a mighty spry gal to get away with a hull heart w'en I was 'round, eh, 'Riah?

DARK. You possess a very desirable place here, Mr. Fortune.

FORT. Oh, yes, pretty comf'table; couldn't wish nothin' more.

DARK. It's just such a place as I have long wished to buy, as a sort of investment, you know. Could you be induced to part with it at your own price?

FORT. Part with Hick'ry Farm! No, siree bob! Not ez long ez Zeke Fortune lives, nor arter he's dead nuther, ef he kin help it. I built this 'ere place fur me'n Lucy Jane jest arter Parson Brown had tied the knot. Fur many years we lived together in it, happy'n contented. In it my darter Jess was born, an' in it Lucy Jane, God bless her, gin up the ghost, ez I mean ter w'en my turn comes round. So ye see, stranger, this house'n me are old relations, an' Zeke Fortune ain't the man to go back on his relations.

DARK. (*aside*). Then there is but one thing to do; Skinner must steal the deed, and at once.

FORT. Jehusifet! but ain't it hot! Jest walk inter the house, an' I'll give ye some hard cider o' my own makin' ez'll make ye think o' paradise. (*they go toward house, talking.*) [*Exit FORTUNE into house.*]

DARK. (*at door*). Remember to keep your eyes open, Skinner. You must act at once. The title-deed and your forty thousand dollars.

[*Exit into house.*]

SKIN. (*solus*). Oh, I won't forget! Zeke Fortune, my turn bez come at last. Ye won the only woman I ever loved from me. I've never forgiven that. Ye'll have a taste of the life I've lived since then. Things'll be changed when I git hold o' that title-deed. You'll be the pauper then.

[*Exit into house.*]

Enter, L., JESSIE and MRS. DODGE, as if returning from a stroll; JESSIE with book and basket of flowers, dressed simply; MRS. D. dressed gorgeously, parasol, etc.—exceptionally bad taste.

MRS. DODGE. Thank goodness we're home again, though we've had a delightful stroll. But oh how warm it was! I must confess, Jessie, I was just a little disappointed. I half expected to meet the alderman this afternoon.

JESSIE. Now, aunt Priscilla, what can you see in that common-place Irishman, I don't understand. So plebeianly vulgar, and such a dreadfully bald head, fringed all around with scarlet hair. Fie on such taste, I say.

MRS. D. Jessie, your utter disregard for my feelings quite shocks me. Alderman McKeegan is my friend, remember, and in my presence you will be kind enough to talk of him with common decency.

JESSIE. And what a dreadful brogue he has.

MRS. D. Brogue, my dear, brogue? You probably have reference to his Celtic accent. That is one of his chief attractions in my eyes. And then he is so very witty. Really, I never feel wearied with the alderman's company. (*they go up and sit L.*)

JESSIE. Why, aunty, I positively believe you have set your cap for the Irish alderman. Imagine me calling that savage, uncle. Ugh! (*makes grimace*) Aunt, I should think you had had enough of matrimony. Why, it's not six months since you buried your third.

MRS. D. And what of that, miss, what of that? I flatter myself I look young enough to be your sister, for all that. And what if I have been married three times? I'm good enough for three more.

JESSIE. Why, I've got a regular Bluebeardess for an aunt! Oh, aunt, you have no romance; you always were so matter of fact.

MRS. D. Romance? Fiddlesticks! That sort of thing was all well enough in olden times, and will do for those wretched, silly books that you spend hours in reading. But in the present day of progression and every-day common sense, such trash won't do. My dear, when you have lived to be of my age, and have passed through my variegated and numerous matrimonial experiences, you will have very little romance left.

JESSIE. That's just what Jack says of romance; he calls it rot, fiddlesticks, and so on.

MRS. D. Jack Nelson is a sensible young man, and would make you an excellent husband. He reminds me very much of my poor dear departed Hezekiah. He was my first, you know.

JESSIE. Oh, but Jack is just too disgustingly matter of fact. It was only the other day that I was reading to him one of those delicious love scenes from Bertha Clay's last novel, "His Mustache was His Fortune," when I was startled by a loud, terrific snore. Jack was actually sleeping.

MRS. D. I can't blame him, my dear. Such stuff and nonsense would put any sensible person to sleep.

JESSIE (*coolly*). Aunt, will you promise never to breathe a word if I tell you a secret?

MRS. D. My dear, I flatter myself I am different from most women in one respect at least; I know how to keep a secret. Why, it was only yesterday Mrs. Smith was telling me how she intended surprising her husband with a magnificent pair of slippers for his birthday next month, and implored me not to say a word about it. Oh, I know how to keep a secret.

JESSIE. Well, then, annt, I'm in love!

MRS. D. Let me congratulate you, my dear. Has Jack proposed?

JESSIE (*disdainfully*). In love with Jack, that raw-boned, matter-of-fact Hoosier! Aunt, I thought you gave me credit for better taste.

MRS. D. Not Jack? Why, I thought it was all settled between you two. Parson Brown spoke to me only last Sunday about—

JESSIE (*interrupting*). I marry Jack Nelson? Never! I'd drown myself first. I—I—

MRS. D. (*interrupting*). There, there, that's taken from one of your trashy novels. You could go a great deal farther and fare worse than marry Jack Nelson. He earns a good salary at the bank, he's straight as a die, and would make a model husband.

JESSIE. But I tell you, aunt, I never could marry him. I won't! I won't! So there!

MRS. D. And yet it is not so long ago that you looked with anything

but disfavor on Jack Nelson's attentions to you. From when dates this sudden aversion?

JESSIE. Ever since I visited my old schoolmate, Nettie Foster, in New York.

MRS. D. And you met some one there you liked better?

JESSIE. Yes. Oh, aunt Priscilla, he is so handsome! black eyes, and the sweetest mustache, and so tall and commanding.

MRS. D. And pray who is this Adonis, who has stolen your heart from honest Jack Nelson?

JESSIE. His name is Gilbert. Is it not a lovely name?

MRS. D. It reminds me of the name of a villain in a play.

JESSIE. Oh, aunt, how can you? He was born to be a hero.

MRS. D. And this man told you he loved you—turned your silly little head, no doubt, with his romantic talk.

JESSIE. He does love me, aunt, and some day he is coming to marry me. He swore it, and though since then I have not heard from him, something tells me he will come.

MRS. D. (*rising*). Well, my dear, I hope with all my heart that he never will come. For, were he an honest lover, he would not have delayed so long. True love, my dear, admits of no barriers. Take my advice, Jessie, and forget all about this city chap. [*Exit into house.*]

JESSIE (*L., on seat, solus*). Oh, aunt does not know Gilbert, or she would not speak like that. A nobler, truer, more honest heart than his never beat in man's breast. I know he loves me, and he will come, for he swore it. But I wonder what has come over me to-day. I feel as downcast as if I knew there was some unhappiness in store for me. But pshaw, how morbid I am! What could happen to cause me unhappiness? (*in deep reverie.*)

Enter DARKWOOD, from house, stands at door, holding picture in hand.

DARK. (*aside*). By Jove! if it isn't Jessie, the little girl whose head I turned last winter in the city. I promised I would come and marry her. (*laughs*) Wonder if she has become tired of waiting. What a foolish chit of a girl she was. Believed every word I told her, by Jove! Rather a coincidence that she should be the daughter of the man I am—(*seeing JESSIE*) Hello! a woman! Jessie, by Heaven! Wonder if she'll remember me? (*goes up to JESSIE and touches her on shoulder.*)

JESSIE (*starting*). Gilbert! You here?

DARK. Then you remember me?

JESSIE. Remember you? I was thinking of you at this very moment. But what brings you here?

DARK. Is it necessary to ask? I come to fulfill my promise made to you last winter.

JESSIE. Then you still love me, Gilbert?

DARK. More than ever, my darling. And you, have you still a little corner in your heart left for me?

JESSIE. Gilbert, it seems like a dream to have you here near me. I can scarcely realize it, I am so happy. Oh, Gilbert, do you remember those delightful times of last winter, how you met and loved me? Oh, you do love me, darling?

DARK. Do you for one moment doubt me, Jessie? See, here is the photograph you gave me. (*taking picture from pocket*) I carry it always next to my heart. Do you remember the promise you made me on that last night, that you would be my wife? Ah, but I read my answer in your eyes. It is yes. Confess now that I am right.

JESSIE. I am so happy! You will never leave me again, Gilbert; promise me that.

DARK. That is impossible. Listen, Jessie. I have no time to spare. Business of paramount importance imperatively demands my return to the city at once. But—

JESSIE (*interrupting*). Scarcely have you come, when you speak of going away. Is that loverlike?

DARK. My darling, I cannot stay; but if you are willing, we need not part.

JESSIE. I do not understand.

DARK. It is simply this. You can come with me. We can be married early to-morrow morning in the city, and after the honeymoon has been spent, we can return and celebrate with the old folks. But mind, it is imperatively necessary that you should leave here without acquainting any one with our intention.

JESSIE. Not tell aunt Priscilla, nor daddy?

DARK. Circumstances which will not bear explanation now, but which you shall hear later, make such a course compulsory.

JESSIE. To leave without a word to daddy? Oh, Gilbert, I cannot; it would break his heart.

DARK. And yet you say you love me. The very first request I make you refuse.

JESSIE. Oh, Gilbert, do not talk like that. You know I love you better than life itself.

DARK. If that were so, you would be guided by me blindly. But I perceive how it is; you love another, and are but coquetting with me. I am in the way; my journey has been for naught. Good-bye! (*going toward gate.*)

JESSIE (*going after him*). Gilbert, I swear to you I love you alone! But what you ask is terrible. Think of the sacrifice!

DARK. To a woman who truly loves a man, no sacrifice she can make for his sake, is too great. Jessie, you may take your choice. I love you, and will make you my wife, but you must come with me to-night without a word to any one, or I leave you now, never to return. You have your alternative. Choose quickly.

JESSIE (*after a mental struggle*). Gilbert, I cannot give you up. I will do anything you ask.

DARK. (*aside*). I thought that would bring her. (*aloud*) Spoken like the brave little girl that you are. Now listen. We have but little time to lose. The next train leaves at six; it is now five. In one hour I will meet you at the station. Do not fail me, or you will have seen me for the last time.

JESSIE. Oh, Gilbert, don't say that!

DARK. Mind, above all, don't breathe a syllable to any living soul. You can write from the city. Why, darling, the minutes will be days until I see you again. Good-bye. (*embraces her.* JESSIE *exits into house.* *Aside, at back*) The house is mine, and I may as well take the girl with it. [Exit, c.

Enter Mrs. DODGE, from house.

Mrs. D. (*solus*). I wonder why the alderman hasn't put in an appearance yet; it's past his time. Ah, a nice man is Lawrence McKeegan! (*sighing*) What a fine couple we would make! I wonder why he don't pop. It's not for the want of a chance, I'm sure. I take care to give him opportunity enough. But then the alderman is such a shy man. (*sighing, and going over to hammock and lying in it*) Ah me! I can

keep the truth from myself any longer. I have fallen a victim to the alderman's charms. I'm in love! Oh, I had just the loveliest dream last night.

Enter McKEEGAN, at back, c.

I dreamed that I was a beautiful princess, and was lying asleep in a hammock, all of jewels, when suddenly a noble prince appeared, attired all in silver and gold. He bent over me and kissed me, and as I drank in his fragrant breath, I looked up into his face, and it was none other than Alderman McKeegan. Oh, what a sweet breath it was! (*closes her eyes.*)

McKEEGAN (*aside*). Larry McKeegan, yer a blackguard if ye spile the dislusion. Ye are the prince, an' yonder lies the beautiful princess. Go an' do your duty. (*approaches hammock and kisses Mrs. D., who turns the other cheek, which he also kisses.* *Aloud*) Noble princess av me heart, accept me 'umble offerin'.

Mrs. D. (*jumping up*). Oh, Alderman, how you frightened me!

McK. (*aside*). Devil a bit frightened was she a minute ago.

Mrs. D. And how could you do such a thing? That's robbery.

McK. Begorra, I'm an honest thafe, thin. Hould still a moment. (*kisses her*) There, take thim back ag'in.

Mrs. D. You naughty man, you! How dare you? But why have you not come before now?

McK. (*aside*). Faith, I wasn't able, that drunk was I. (*aloud*) Oh, Mrs. Dodge, ye see several av me political friends called to see me last night on affairs concerning the state, (*coughs*) an' they kept me very busy. We was discussin' the high tariff on whiskey used for home consumption. They left me this mornin' in state.

Mrs. D. In state?

McK. Yis, (*aside*) in a state of intoxication.

Mrs. D. Your state affairs must give you many a headache?

McK. Yis, that's the truth. (*aside*) Me head is splittin' every minute. (*aloud*) Yis, a stateman's loife is not an intoirely happy one.

Mrs. D. Yes, especially when he is entirely alone, as you are, with no one to confide in, and help you bear the burden of your troubles.

McK. (*aside*). Begorra, is she after half av me load?

Mrs. D. It's strange, Alderman, how deep an interest I take in you and your affairs. (*aside*) There's a chance for him!

McK. (*aside*). I wish I had the courage to ask her about the picnic.

Mrs. D. I never felt for any man as I feel for you!

McK. (*aside*). That's sayin' a good dale. She's been matrimoniated thray toimes before. But now's me toime to spake what's on me moind. Oi'll ask her about goin' to the picnic. (*aloud*) Mrs. Dodge, I have a requist to make av ye; ye'll excuse me bouldness, but—(*aside*) How the devil shall I ask her?

Mrs. D. (*aside*). It's coming at last, thank goodness! He's going to pop! (*aloud*) A request to ask of me? Go on, Mr. McKeegan, go on; it is granted before you ask it.

McK. I'm not so sure but ye'll not take offence at me bouldness in askin' a woman av yer standin' to—to—(*aside*) I'll ask her now av I die.

Mrs. D. (*aside*). He is embarrassed, poor fellow! Why don't he go on? I'm sure some one will spoil it all in a moment. (*looks around.*)

McK. Mrs. Dodge—Priscilla—Mrs. Dodge, I mean—I beg yer pardon for me bouldness.

Mrs. D. Not at all, Mr. McKeegan, not at all. (*cooly*) You may call me Priscilla, Lawrence.

McK. Will, thin, Mrs. Priscilla, ye've been very koind to me durin' me sojourny in this counthry, an' I should loike to show ye my appreciation; an' so av ye'll have me as—as——

Mrs. D. Have you? Of course I will, rather than any other man I know. (*throws arms around him*) Oh, Lawrence, I'm so happy!

McK. But ye don't know yet what ye'll have me for. Ye see, me political organization gives a picnic nixt wake, an' I want to know, would ye have me as an escort?

Mrs. D. (*dismayed*). Have you as an escort? Why, I thought—is that all?

McK. (*aside*). All? Begorra! what else does she want—a brass band?

Mrs. D. (*going to hammock, sobbing, aside*). Oh, but I see it all! My poor deluded hopes! And I thought he was going to pop. (*aloud*) Oh, Mr. McKeegan, how could you, how could you?

McK. (*aside*). There, now I've done it! Begorra, I knew I'd put me fut in it. A political picnic is no place for a widdy. (*aloud*) Mrs. Dodge—I mane Priscilla—no, I mane Mrs. Podge—Oh, I don't know what I mane—I 'umbly beg yer pardon fur shockin' yer nerves. I—I—excuse me. I've an important ingagement wid a man in Halifax, Jerusalem, or somewhere. (*aside*) Begorra, I'll make me escape, an' take the nixt train for the Sandwich Islands. [*Exit, c.*]

Enter FORTUNE, from house.

FORT. I thought I heard something wrong in the pig-pen. Wall, I'll be gol-darned ef it ain't Priscilla, makin' a fool of herself, as usual. (*goes over to hammock.*)

Mrs. D. Oh, Lawrence, if you have not the courage to speak, I must forget my maiden modesty for once. Lawrence, my own, I love you? (*puts arm around FORTUNE's neck, who leans over hammock*) I know what you would ask; you want me to be your wife. Is it not so?

FORT. (*aside*). Wall, I'll be gol-darned ef she don't take me for the alderman. (*aloud*) Priscilla, be ye a-goin' daft, a-speakin' such trash?

Mrs. D. (*starting up*). You? Bah! I thought it was the—the——

FORT. The alderman, eh? "Lawrence, I love ye." (*laughing*) Wall, I'll be gol-darned ef that ain't the richest joke I ever heard on. (*laughs.*)

Mrs. D. (*imitating*). Ha, ha, ha! Oh, yes, very funny, isn't it, seeing your poor sister made a fool of! (*aside*) And to think the alderman could be so ungrateful! The wretch! I never could see much in that man, any how. I hate him! Only let me set my eyes on him again! I'll give him a taste of my tongue he won't forget in a hurry!

[*Exit into house.*]

FORT. Wall, I'll be gol-darned ef I thort iwasanetyness was in the fami-ly afore now. [*Exit, R.*]

Enter SKINNER, from house, with title-deed in hand.

SKIN. (*solus*). Yes, here's the deed, sure enough. Had less trouble finding it than I expected. Now for the young stranger at the tavern. (*at gateway seeing FORTUNE, who is still laughing at the joke*) That's right, old man, enjoy yerself while ye can. Ye won't feel quite so funny to-morrow. Zeke Fortune, ye stole the only gal I ever loved from me; now I steal yer house. I've waited a long time to get squar' with ye, and now my chance has come. We're quits! [*Exit, c.*]

FORT. (*returning, still laughing*). She took me for the alderman! Wall, I'll be gol-darned! (*crosses and sits L.*)

Enter JESSIE, from house. Pauses on steps and regards FORTUNE.

JESSIE (*aside*). How happy dad seems to-day—this day of all others! Dear old dad! How will he feel in one short hour, when he finds I am gone? Oh, how I dread that thought! Oh, but all is for the best. We will be together again very soon; then he will forgive me when he sees how happy I am with Gilbert. Yes, I must learn to look at it in that light. (*goes over to her father and puts arms around his neck. Aloud*) What makes my old daddy so happy to-day?

FORT. Is it you, my little gal? Why, gal, your old daddy has been taken for an alderman just now. Who wouldn't be happy at bein' taken for an alderman? "Lawrence, I love you!" (*laughs, then suddenly stops and looks intently at JESSIE*) But now it's my turn to catechise. What makes you so unhappy like to-day, gal? You look as sorrowful as a dog that's lost his master. Have you'n Jack been a-sassin' each other?

JESSIE. I am not unhappy, dad. What could have put such a thought as that into your dear old head?

FORT. (*strokes her hair and looks at her*). As like as one pure white lily to another, little one!

JESSIE. Was she very beautiful, dad. I have such a dim recollection of her.

FORT. She was what she is now, an angel in heaven!

JESSIE. But had she been plain, homely, and other than what she was you would have loved her as well?

FORT. Little gal, good looks is only as deep as the skin; but the soul and character of a person is where you must look for true beauty. Her character was like a pit without bottom. And that reminds me of a song Lucy Jane used to sing to me when we were first spliced. You know it, little one, my favorite. "Believe me, if all those endearin' young charms," it begins.

JESSIE. Yes, dad, I know it well. (*sings.*)

"Believe me, if all those endearing young charms,
Which I gaze on so fondly to-day,
Were to change by to-morrow, and fleet in my arms,
Like fairy gifts fading away.
Thou would'st still be adored as this moment thou art.
Let thy loveliness fade as it will,
And around the dear ruin each wish of my heart
Would entwine itself verdantly still.

"It is not while beauty and youth are thine own,
And thy cheeks unprofaned by a tear,
That the fervor and faith of my soul can be known,
To which time will make thee more dear.
Ah! the heart that has truly lov'd never forgets,
But as truly loves on to the close;
As the sunflower turns on her god when he sets
The same look which he turned when he rose."

(*During song FORTUNE furtively brushes tears from his eyes. At its conclusion JESSIE sobs on her father's knee.*)

FORT. There, there, little one, don't cry. It is a sort o' affectin' little

tune though. I never hear it but I think o' those happy days when your mother was alive. Ah, them was happy days, Jessie! If she was livin', how proud she'd be o' a darter like you, Jess.

JESSIE. Dad, do you believe in the words of that song?

FORT. As surely as I believe in heaven above.

JESSIE. And no matter how—how—I—I should change, you would still love me?

FORT. Jess, ye might turn on yer poor old dad, drive him from yer home, an' load him down with curses an' hard words; his old heart wouldn't change towards ye; an' in the hour o' trouble his old arms would be the fust to open fur ye. But I'll be gol-darned ef I ain't gettin' ez glum an' solemn ez an undertaker. It's a'most time for tea. Run in now an' help Peggy lay the plates, that's a good little girl; it'll sort o' liven ye up some'at. (*JESSIE walks slowly towards the door, stands and casts one glance at her father, and exit into house.*)

Enter JACK, from road, c.

JACK. Hello, daddy, how are you getting on to-day?

FORT. Pretty tol'able, pretty tol'able, thank'ee, Jack. Jest gettin' home from the bank?

JACK. Yes, and I thought I'd just stop in and see whether you had any odd chores you want done. (*aside*) I wonder where Jessie is?

FORT. (*aside*). I'd jest like to know, now, how it is when young folks is in love they can lie so. Now he jest dropped in to get a word with Jess, I'll bet. Chores indeed! (*aloud*) Jack, how is things at the bank? Squar' Smith told me yesterd'y that things wasn't 'zackly what they might be.

JACK. That was only a slight temporary embarrassment. Things will be running smoothly again to-morrow. There was an unusual run on the bank by depositors, and the ready cash gave out. You need not have the slightest uneasiness on that score. (*stage gradually grows dark as night is coming on.*)

FORT. Wall, ye see, Jack, all that I've got in the world is in the keepin' o' the bank, an' ef she goes up, I'll hev nothin' to fall back on but this old house, an' it'd break my poor heart to part with that.

JACK. Now don't worry, daddy; the Mayville Savings Bank is as solid as a rock; nothing short of embezzlement or robbery could break it.

FORT. Wall, Jack, I trust ye may be right, my boy; I've got my fears though. Ye'll stay to tea, Jack, won't ye? Of course ye will. I've got a couple o' accounts I want ye to straighten up for me any how. Come into the house an' I'll show 'em to ye. And as for the bank, I don't—

[*Exit with JACK into house, talking.*]

Enter McKEEGAN, c., coat collar up, hut over eyes; he looks around carefully.

McK. Nobody in soight. I guess it's safe to vinture back fur a minit. In me hurry to kape that appointment I forgot me cane. (*looks for it*) Where the divil can I have put it? Begorra, what a turn the widdy did give me. I never saw a woman have the highsterics before this day. I wonder where she is. (*looks in at keyhole*) Faix, I haven't the courage to knock. (*door suddenly opens and Mrs. DODGE enters.*)

Mrs. D. (*starting back*). Oh, a man! A burglar! Good Heavens! Oh, Mr. Burglar, I won't scream. Please don't molest me. Here's my purse, my earrings, everything; here, take them, but don't harm a poor defenceless creature like me. (*on knees.*)

McK. (*aside*). Begorra, I'll have me revinge now fur the freight she gave me. (*aloud*) It's not yer jew'ls I want, but revinge. Blood! blood! Prepare to die! (*serio-tragic air*.)

Mrs. D. Oh, dear, kind, good Mr. Burglar, what have I done that you should seek such a terrible vengeance?

McK. (*aside*). Faix, Oi'll lay it on strong! (*aloud*) Listen an' I'll tell ye. But a few hours since, the noblest man the world has iver seen, me best fri'nd, Alderman Larry McKeegan, left me in the best of health an' sperits. (*aside*) Especially the sperits. (*aloud*) Now his body dangles from the limb of a tree in yonder grove, an' the wind is blowin' his gintle form to an' fro.

Mrs. D. (*who during this entire scene has not looked at McKEEGAN*). Lawrence—Alderman McKeegan—dead?

McK. Yis, madam; driven to infanticide by your croquetry. Ye refused to go to the picnic wid him, an' it broke his heart. Even while I'm spakin' I can hear the warm summer zephyrs as they softly meander through his evergreen whiskers, a-playin' tag wid his coat-tails. Oh, the thought brings tears to me eyes!

Mrs. D. Oh, what have I done! what have I done! Tell me that you are in jest—that it is not true!

McK. Alas! would that I could say otherwise. Never again will the silvery accents of his swate voice tickle your ears, nor the fragrance of his breath swaten the atmosphere! Killed by you, cruel woman! Dead! dead!

Mrs. Oh, Lawrence, Lawrence, come back to your Priscilla!

McK. (*aside*). Begorra, Oi've been dead long enough, an' now Oi'll risurriet mesilf, an' fill her wid joy! (*aloud*) Priscilla, me loife, look up into me oyes an' behold before ye, alive an' well, Larry McKeegan!

Mrs. D. You! you!

McK. Forgive me slight deception, Priscilla; 'twas but a ruse of love.

Mrs. D. You! you! And I thought it was a burglar! Oh, it's too bad, it's too bad! How could you make such a fool of me? (*sobs hysterically. Crosses to L.*)

McK. (*aside*). Begorra, she's gettin' into the highsterics again! Oh, Lord! what shall I do? what shall I do? If they hear her in the house they'll think she's bein' kilt intoirely. Oh, Lord! (*aloud*) Oh, Priscilla, me own, I—

Mrs. D. (*sobbing*). Don't Priscilla me, you miserable man—you, you insiduous wretch—you, you monster—you, you—Oh! oh! (*sobbing*.)

McK. (*nervous business. Runs frantically from PRISCILLA, who seats herself in hammock, to the house, gesticulating wildly*). For the love av Hivin, Mrs. Dodge, listen to rason. It was all a joke; I swear it. (*aside*) Av Oi iver git out av this aloive, Oi'll swear off women intoirely.

Mrs. D. You're a mean, contemptible thing, that's what ye are!

McK. Oi'm not, Priscilla; Oi—

Mrs. D. How dare you contradict me? You are!

McK. Priscilla, yer roight; Oi'm inything. Oi—

Mrs. D. Oh, what a fool I am!

McK. Yer roight, yer roight! No, yer wrong, yer wrong; av course yer wrong.

Mrs. D. Insult added to injury! Oh, that I should have lived to see this day! Oh, I wish I was dead!

McK. So do Oi, so do Oi!

Mrs. D. Oh, how can you say it?

McK. Oi didn't mane that; Oi maned—oh, Oi don't know what Oi

mane, Oi'm that distracted. (*aside*) An' there's some one comin'; I'll swear it. Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord! Oi'm good for a breech av promise. (*aloud*) Oh, Priscilla, how can ye vex me so, whin ye know Oi love ye? (*goes up to her and puts his arm around her waist; she offers no opposition*) Oh, Priscilla, me loife, forgive me; it was but a plan to discover whether ye cared for me. Oi see ye do. Ah, don't attempt to deny it. Oi know it. Priscilla, me own, Oi love ye! Will ye marry me?

Mrs. D. (*aside*). This is more like business.

McK. Priscilla, loife widout ye wouldn't be worth livin'. Say ye forgive me.

Mrs. D. I have nothing to forgive, Lawrence. I knew it was you all the time.

McK. (*aside*). For an iligant, first-class, double-bristed liar, recommend me a w'd dy!

Mrs. D. And you do love me, Lawrence?

McK. Love, me own? 'Tis more than love; 'tis distraction. Romeo's love for Juliet couldn't hould a candle to the affliction I fale for ye!

Mrs. D. What a lovely sentiment! Ah, what a noble Romeo you would make, Lawrence!

McK. Ah, Priscilla, me own, av Romeo had discovered ye before he met Juliet, Juliet would have died an ould maid!

Mrs. D. I would love to play Juliet to your Romeo.

McK. Av ye'll just walk into the parlor wid me, an' turn the loights down, we'll rehearse the balcony scane. Oi'll guarantay to make ye perfect it fifteen minutes. Lade the way—Oi follow.

[*They exit into house.*]

Enter JESSIE, stealthily, from house, hooded and cloaked, satchel in hand. Stage darkened. Slow music, piano.

JESSIE (*solus*). I have slipped out thus far unobserved! Oh, how I detest this base subterfuge, this stealing away like a thief in the night! But Gilbert said it was for the best, and I must be guided by him blindly, he is so noble and so good. These few lines will explain all I dare tell. (*drops note*) Farewell, daddy! Forgive your little girl this deception. We shall meet again very soon, for Gilbert promised me that. I will return to you happy, oh, so happy! (*sobbing at gate*) Farewell, daddy, farewell!

[*Exit, c.*]

Enter, from house, JACK and FORTUNE, with lantern.

JACK. Well, good-night, daddy; I must be going.

FORT. Wall, then, ef ye won't stay to tea, good-night to ye, Jack, my boy. I'll jest take a look in at the barn an' see thet all's right for the night.

[*Crosses stage and exit, L.*]

JACK (*solus. Music, very low*). Why is it that Jessie so studiously avoids me? She barely noticed me to-night. What can I have done to displease her? And I had so fondly hoped that some day she might be my wife. Alas! such happiness is not for poor Jack Nelson. Ever since her return from the city her manner towards me has changed entirely. Can it be that she has lost her heart to one of those sweet-tongued city chaps? But no; Jessie is too honest to have a secret from her old playfellow. To-morrow I shall speak to her. I must have an explanation. Ah, well, there's no chance of seeing her again to-night, I might as well be going. (*goes toward gate, c., finds letter and picks it up*) Hello, what's this? Somebody must have lost it. Jessie's

writing, as I live! Great Heavens! what can this mean? (*opens and reads.*)

"Dear Dad—Forgive your little girl for what she is about to do. I must leave you, dad, for a short time. Believe me, I go with one in whose honor and integrity I can safely trust. I will explain all later.

"Your loving daughter, JESSIE."

My God! Eloped! Jessie, my darling, gone with another! Oh, Heaven help me! I'm choking! (*faints.* FORTUNE is heard outside whistling "Believe me, if all those endearing young charms."

Enter FORTUNE, L., with lantern, still whistling.

FORT. Somehow or other that tune keeps runnin' through my head. I must ask Jess to sing it again for me, arter tea. (*goes toward house and stumbles over JACK*) Jehusifet! who's thet? Jack, by jingo! sound asleep. Jack, my boy, I say Jack! (*shaking him*) Wake up! ye'll be ketchin' yer death o' cold. He's fainted! Jehusifet! (*culling*) Jessie! Priscilla! Peggy! Some water, quick! Jack's fainted! (*stop music. Bringing-to business.*)

Enter, from house, MRS. DODGE and McKEEGAN.

MRS. D. What's the matter, Zek'l?

FORT. Some water, quick! Jack Nelson's fainted dead away! (McK. fetches water. *Bringing-to business.* JACK comes to.)

JACK (*feebly.* Music, *very low*). Gone! Gone! My God! Gone! Oh, Jessie, come back to me!

FORT. Jessie gone! What d'ye mean, Jack?

JACK (*showing letter*). Read! I found this here but a moment since. I trust it is not yet too late. She must be stopped! (FORTUNE takes letter, puts on spectacles, PRISCILLA holds lantern.)

FORT. Jessie's writin', by jingo! (*reads.*)

"Dear Dad—Forgive your little girl for what she is about to do. I must leave you, dad, for a short time. Believe me, I go with one in whose honor and integrity I can safely trust. I will explain all later.

"Your loving daughter, JESSIE."

(*Sinks back on bench, supported by PRISCILLA and JACK*) My little lamb gone! gone! Stolen from her old dad! Oh, God! give me strength to bear it! Gone! gone! My Jess! Father in heaven, I pray you watch over my gal, watch over her! Bring her back to me unsullied, untainted by the world's evil! Gone! gone! (*sobs on JACK's shoulder, PRISCILLA bending over him, McKEEGAN sadly watching.*)

R. McKEEGAN. JACK. FORTUNE. PRISCILLA. L.

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

Eighteen months are supposed to have elapsed between Acts I. and II.

Slow music for curtain after overture.

SCENE.—FORTUNE'S *shanty*. *A poorly-furnished interior, cracked walls, etc.* FORTUNE discovered seated at fireplace as curtain rises.

FORT. (*solus*). It's time Jack got back. Wonder what is keepin' him. Poor boy! I hope he's found a job, for Squar' Darkwood said ef the rent warn't paid this week, out we'd go. (*coughs*) My, but it's cold! 'Pears to me I need a new coat. Ah, times is changed sence my poor Jess was stole from me. Not a word has she sent me from that day to this. How like a horrible dream it all seems! Hick'ry Farm was took from me. They tole me I owed 'Riah Skinner money. I never owed a cent to any man, 'n I tole 'em so. But 'Riah swore he was right, 'n showed 'em a receipt 'n the title-deed o' Hick'ry Farm; an' so they tole me I must get out. Then the Mayville Bank was robbed, 'n it went up, 'n all my hard-earned savin's went with it. They accused my Jack o' the robbery, but o' course ther warn't no proof to hold him on. An' now the finger o' scorn is p'inted at him, 'n he can earn no money to keep us alive. Oh, that I might awake 'n find it all a dream! My God! what have I done that I should be so punished?

Enter JACK, C., at back. Stands and regards FORTUNE. Slow music.

JACK (*aside*). Weeping again, poor old man! How my heart bleeds for him. And no luck, as usual. Why is fate so cruel to us? How can I tell daddy that I return empty handed? (*coming forward. Aloud*) Daddy!

FORT. Ah, is it you, Jack, my boy?

JACK. Daddy, you are cold; your hands are numb.

FORT. Would it were the coldness of death.

JACK. No, no, daddy, you must not talk like that. (*takes off coat and wraps it around FORTUNE, or helps him on with it*) There, take my coat; my young blood is warmer than yours. There now, does that feel better? (*seats himself at FORTUNE'S feet.*)

FORT. How kin I ever repay ye, Jack, for the kindness ye've shown me? May God bless ye, may God bless ye!

JACK. Daddy, you owe me nothing. It is I who am your debtor. Who was it took care of the poor little waif, Jack Nelson, when, bereft of father and mother, he was cast upon the mercies of the world? Who watched over his earlier years with fatherly care? You, daddy, you! God be thanked that he has granted me the opportunity for repaying what is not alone a debt of gratitude, but a duty.

Enter, c., during above speech, DARKWOOD, handsomely attired, silk hat, fur overcoat, etc. He stands regarding the two, a cynical smile on his lips.

DARK. (*at conclusion of JACK'S speech*). When you two have finished your sentimental nonsense, may be you'll listen to a few words from me. (*FORTUNE and JACK start up*) Well, have you the rent you promised me?

FORT. Squar', times hez gone hard with us, an'—

DARK. Bah! The same old story every time I come. Do you mean to tell me that two such able-bodied men as you and that fellow there. are unable between you to earn a mere pittance of rent? If you would do less moaning and sighing, you might be able to pay your honest debts.

FORT. An' so they shall be paid, every penny o' them. Only a little patience, Squar', is all I ask. Jack here, poor boy, searches fur somethin' to do every day o' his life, but luck's ag'in him. An' ez fur me, I'm not the hale an' hearty man I was a year ago, afore my—my—

DARK. (*interrupting*). Before your daughter ran off with that handsome city chap, eh? By Jove! I can't half blame her, if this is the sort of life you led her. No wonder she sought the gay dissipations of the city—the life of an adventuress and—

FORT. (*interrupting*). Stop thar, Squar'! Stop thar! Heap all yer hard words on me; call me what ye will, I kin bear it; but, rich an' powerful ez ye are, dare to utter one slander ag'in my gal Jess, an' old an' feeble though I be, I'll force the lyin' words down yer throat! My gal Jess, wherever she may be, is as innocent an' honest as she is beautiful. Sorrier hez hardened my heart ag'in every subjec' but thet; so beware, Squar', beware what ye say.

DARK. Any pity, which I might have felt for you, your words have prevented. Mark me, if by six o'clock to-night your rent is not forthcoming, out you go, bag and baggage. Your insolence deserves a reprimand, and were it not for your gray hairs, a blow would be my answer.

JACK (*coming forward to c.*). Well, then, Gilbert Darkwood, the words uttered by Mr. Fortune are my sentiments also. Come, give me your answer; my hairs are not gray. (*looks fiercely at DARKWOOD.*)

DARK. (*insolently*). How dare you speak to an honest man?

JACK (*fiercely*). What do you mean? (*taking a step nearer.*)

DARK. (*nonchalantly, without looking at JACK*). Exactly what I say. A thief and scoundrel has not the right to approach a gentleman, much less to—

JACK (*interrupting*). You have uttered a deliberate falsehood, and you know it; and this (*striking him*) is my answer, you coward. (*stands for a moment fearlessly facing DARKWOOD, then to FORTUNE*) Come, daddy, honest men should not breathe the atmosphere polluted by the presence of such a dastardly villain. [*They exit into room, r.*]

DARK. (*solus*). The young scamp, I will make him suffer for this if I have to move heaven and earth to do so. Gilbert Darkwood is not the man to be trifled with, as he will find to his sorrow! (*paces stage.*)

Enter SKINNER, c. to L.

Skinner, you here! Well, what do you want?

SKIN. Squar', I've been huntin' ye high'n low. I've got a bit o' news to tell ye as'll startle ye some'at.

DARK. (*impatiently*). Well, what is it?

SKIN. There be a New York detective here a-lookin' up the Mayville Bank robbery, an' I hearn tell thet he had found some new evidence. I want to put ye on yer guard, Squar', that's all.

DARK. Hush! (*looking around*) For Heaven's sake, hush!

SKIN. Wall, there's no tellin' what might be discovered. These New York fellows be pretty spry, I tell ye.

DARK. What sort of a looking man is this detective?

SKIN. Wall, he's tall, thin, an' altogether som'at of a swell.

DARK. -Detective Sergeant Rankin, of the Central Office, as I live! The only man on the force I am afraid of. He knows me! Yet, in my present circumstances, I doubt whether he would recognize Ralph Douglas, the forger and bank thief. (*laughs*) However, Skinner, it would never do to run any chances, for that man is as keen-eyed as a lynx; he never fails to land his game. We must outwit him, come what may.

SKIN. We! What hev I to do with it?

DARK. What have you to do with it? Why, fool—

SKIN. (*interrupting*). Yes; did I hev a hand in the bank robbery?

DARK. Curse you! No, you coward; you backed down at the last moment, and I had to do it myself.

SKIN. Well, then, Squar', what hev I to do with it?

DARK. Were I trapped, I could easily implicate you as an accomplice.

SKIN. An' I hev taken good care to be able to prove a' alibi.

DARK. Bah! Enough of this. It must not come to that. This detective must be put on a wrong scent.

SKIN. An' what do you propose to do?

DARK. Skinner, there is but on way to throw this fellow on the wrong scent. We must cast suspicion upon another, and thus save ourselves. That impudent rascal, Nelson, is the man upon whom suspicion would rest if rightly directed. Indeed, I have heard more than one person say that Nelson knew more about the robbery than he pretended to. Once cast popular suspicion upon him, and our task is accomplished.

SKIN. Yes; but how do ye mean to fix the guilt on him? Whar's yer proofs?

DARK. There is exactly where I require your aid. You must swear out an affidavit that on the night of the robbery you saw Nelson hanging about the vicinity of the bank in a suspicious manner. To explain your silence until now, you can say that your love for old man Fortune tied your tongue. But what's the matter with you?

SKIN. (*facing DARKWOOD, and looking fearlessly at him, speaks in a determined tone*). Squar' Darkwood, there's much the matter with me, ez ye shall hear. It's nigh onto a year an' a half sence ye tempted me by means of your cussed gold, to rob my old friend Zeke Fortune of all he possessed on airth. That act of mine made you rich, Squar'; a respected man in the community; but it made me the most miserable man on the face of the airth. Sence that day my conscience has given me no peace. While the money ye gave me fur my share in the transaction made me respected an' looked up to by my neighbors, in my secret heart I despised myself, an' I swore I'd make restitution to Zeke some day, an' so I will. After what I hev just said, do ye think, Squar', I'd do any more of yer dirty work? No; let me die first!

DARK. (*fiercely*). What! you old fool! would you betray me?

SKIN. Betray you? No; fur there should be honor even among thieves. (*slight pause*) But sooner than stan' by an' see that young man dragged down to the level of a common thief, I'll tell all I know!

DARK. What! you infernal idiot! you would ruin me! (*seizes SKINNER by the throat—struggle—SKINNER sinks to his knees*) Curse you! Let one syllable of what you know cross your lips, and I swear I'll throttle you, if I have to swing for it! Come, your answer; will you keep my secret?

SKIN. For heaven's sake, take yer hand away!

DARK. Not until you answer me. Quick!

SKIN. I'll keep your secret; I swear it!

DARK. (*releasing him*). Ha! I thought that would bring you to

term. Now, mark me, that contemptible puppy, Nelson, must be convicted, on your affidavit, or by heaven I'll strangle you! (*walks to door, c., glances at SKINNER, who is still on floor, and exit.*)

SKI. (*rises, goes to door c., and stunts looking off*). And now mark me, Gilbert Darkwood, I'll frustrate your schemes ef it costs me my life!
[*Exit, c. d.*]

Enter JACK, R. D. Puts on hat and muffler while speaking.

JACK (*solus*). Something must be done at once, or to-night we will be without shelter. I'll see Squire Smith. Probably he will assist us.

[*Exit, L. D.*]

Enter JESSIE, C. D. Slow music.

JESSIE (*coming down, slowly*). Home again, thank Heaven! Home! Ah, what comfort that simple word brings to me! At last I am with daddy once again! But has he forgiven me? Oh! should he spurn, or refuse to recognize me, it would kill me! But no; I distinctly remember his words on that fatal day, "Jess, ye might load me down with hard words, but in the hour of your trouble my old arms would be the first to open to you." Dear old daddy, how miserably I have repaid all your goodness! (*sobs. Flute is heard playing "Believe me, if all those endearing young charms."* JESSIE *listens, startled*) I sang that to daddy on that last day! (*sobs.*)

Enter FORTUNE, R. D., with flute.

FORT. Thet old tune awakens mem'ries in me which most drives me mad. Ah, well I remember the last time I sung thet tune, with my innocent little Jess kneelin' beside me, a-cryin' as ef her heart would break. Oh God! I pray you send my darlin' gal back to me! Ah, some day she will come; I feel it; I'm sure on't.

JESSIE (*coming forward*). Daddy, your trust has not been misplaced; I am here, home, home again!

FORT. Jessie! Jessie, my little gal, come back to me! Oh, the Lord be praised! the Lord be praised! (*sobbing in each others arms.*)

JESSIE. Oh, daddy, can you forgive the wrong I did you?

FORT. Forgive you, my pet? Why, ther's nothin' to forgive. Oh, Jess, it do feel so natural to have ye near me again! Why, Jess, yer old daddy could git right up 'n'dance a reg'lar breakdown, he's so happy! An' mebbe Jack won't be delighted!

JESSIE. Jack, poor fellow!

FORT. Jess, Jack's a brick, thet's what he is! He's stuck to me all through my troubles, like a Good Samaritan.

JESSIE. Like the good fellow he always was, bless him! Too late did I perceive his worth. It was only after my experience with that villain, Darkwood, that I—

FORT. (*interrupting*). Darkwood? Darkwood? My God! Child, it can't be the squar'—Gilbert Darkwood?

JESSIE. Daddy, he alone is to blame for all the troublesome past! Listen, daddy. I met him when I visited Nettie Foster, in the city, last winter, and he beguiled me into believing that he loved me. God help me! I felt convinced that he spoke the truth. I next met him on that awful day of over a year ago. Would to heaven that fate had been less cruel. He entreated me to fly with him, and be married in the city on the following day. In my blindness, I listened to his lying words, and

fled with him to the city. Ere we reached our destination I had discovered my blunder, and my eyes were opened to the enormity of what I had done. Shame overwhelmed me; I knew not what to do; but I determined to leave Darkwood as soon as we reached the depot; and so I did. While his attention was engrossed with a hackman, I hastily slipped away; and, thank God, I have not seen him from that day to this!

FORT. The villainous rascal! My poor child!

JESSIE. Daddy, I was so filled with shame that I could not bring myself to look into your honest face, and I dared not return home. I found employment at a milliner's, and there I plodded my way along, barely making a living, until but one short month ago, when mere chance brought me in contact with uncle Larry and Aunt Priscilla, who had just returned from Europe. Then I broke down completely, and until a week ago I was unable to leave my bed. Oh, daddy, words cannot describe now I yearned for home and you all those weary, weary months! Then aunt Priscilla determined that I should surprise you; and, daddy, here I am, and *they* will be here presently. Oh, daddy, they have been so good to me!

FORT. May God bless them for it! May God bless them for it!

JESSIE. Daddy, dear old daddy, tell me once again that you forgive your little Jess, and love her as well as of old!

FORT. Jessie, ye're dearer to me than ever, insomuch ez I came so near losin' ye!

McKEEGAN (*outside*). This is the house. Priscilla, me loife, come on!

JESSIE. Here they are now! that's uncle Larry's voice. (*opens door*.)

Enter McKEEGAN and PRISCILLA, C. D.

McK. Here we are, Jessie! Why, Zeke, how are ye? how are ye? (*shake hands*.)

FORT. Alderman, it be a long time sence we met; how be ye! An' you, Priscilla?

PRISCILLA. Zek'l, my poor brother! (*embraces him*.)

McK. (*after a short pause*). Foine! Break away to yer corners!

FORT. Wall, I do declar' to goodness gracious me, it does my old heart good to see ye once more! How kin I ever thank ye for the kindness ye've shown to my little gal? God bless ye both! God bless ye both!

PRISCILLA. We did no more than our duty, Zek'l; so say no more about that. And so this is your home? (*looks about*) What a wretched place!

FORT. Wall, it isn't 'zackly Hick'ry Farm, I'll give in, but for a poor man—

McK. Begorra, a man oughtn't to be poor long, livin' here.

PRISCILLA. Now what do you mean by that, love?

McK. Why, sure, me own darlint, because it's so draughty!

PRISCILLA (*aside*). Now what a delightful pun that is! Ah, that man is so witty! (*aloud, after an admiring look at McKEEGAN*) Poor Zeke! how you must have suffered! Squire Smith told us all about it down at the station. But why did you never answer my letters?

FORT. Where was the good of botherin' others with my trouble?

JESSIE. Trouble, daddy! Henceforth may that word have no place in the vocabulary of the Fortune family.

FORT. Amen to that, little one!

McK. Begorra, Zeke, ye may well say amin to that; for as long as

Larry McKeegan has the price av a whiskey toddy in his pocket, be-gorra, the half av it is yours! (*strikes attitude, and then appears to converse with FORTUNE.*)

PRISCILLA (*aside to JESSIE, rapturously*). How touching a sentiment! What a noble man he is! Oh, Jessie, how I love that man! I never thought my old heart capable of feeling for any one as I do for him. Tell me candidly, Jessie, do you think he reciprocates my affection?

JESSIE. Why, aunt, does not his every action justify that belief?

PRISCILLA. Ah, Jessie, I have my doubts nevertheless; the alderman is such a terrible flirt!

JESSIE. Aunt, how can you think of such a thing?

PRISCILLA. Well, my suspicions are not entirely groundless. It was only the other day a mysterious individual called on the alderman, and unintentionally I overheard part of their conversation. It was about a woman, and her name was—let me see—Helen, yes, Helen Blazes.

JESSIE. Aunt, uncle Larry is the most devoted of husbands; you must not let such a thought enter your head. Come, no more of this foolishness; let us take a look about the house.

[*Exit JESSIE, R. As PRISCILLA is about to leave, McKEEGAN kisses hand to her.*]

PRISCILLA (*at door, aside, sighing*). Ah, with all his faults, I love him still! [*Exit, R.*]

McK. (*coming down with FORTUNE*). Zek'l, I bless the day that I laid oyes on Priscilly! Sure, it's a darlint little woife she is—as true an' handsome a woman as iver stood in two shoes.

FORT. Wall, now, by gosh! why shouldn't she be? She's my sister!

McK. Bedad, Zeke, it's as good as driukin' a barrel of whiskey to see ye talkin' an' actin' loike the loight-hearted Zek'l I used to know!

FORT. Happy ain't the word, Larry—I'm more'n that. I'll be goldarned ef I don't jest feel like standin' on my hands an' puttin' my feet up ag'in the wall, as I used to when I was a boy. Happy! Jehusefet! Excuse me one minute; I can't help it—my feelin's is gettin' the best of me. (*goes to back of stage and executes a pas-seul*) There! (*coming down*) I feel better now.

McK. Bedad, ye dance loike a young buck!

FORT. Oh, I could allers hold my own at dancin'.

McK. (*confidentially*). Zeke, are ye able to kape a still tongne in yer head? (*FORTUNE nods*) Then Oi'll tell ye av a bit av a surprise Oi've arranged for Priscilly's birthday, nixt wake. (*looks around cautiously*) What d'ye think now Oi've bought her?

FORT. Dunno. Can't say.

McK. A pony and village cart!

FORT. No? Do tell! Hev ye?

McK. It's a mare, an' the swatest little animal ye iver sot oyes on. (*PRISCILLA opens door, R., and looks in*) Her hair's as soft as flax, and her big brown oyes are beautiful to behold.

PRISCILLA (*aside*). Who can Larry be talking about?

FORT. Gosh! she must be a fine one. What's her name?

McK. Sure it's the most comical name ye iver heard av. Faith, she's called Hell an' Blazes! (*both laugh.*)

PRISCILLA (*aside*). That woman again! Oh, I knew I was right—Lawrence is not true to me; he loves that miserable huzzy, Helen Blazes!

McK. An' ye should see her legs!—straight an' smooth as an arrow, an' the smallest fut ye iver saw!

PRISCILLA (*aside*). Oh, the deceitful wretch! That I should have put my implicit trust in such a man! Oh, I hate—I detest—I—I abominate him!

McK. Oi'll be afther bringin' her down here nixt wake.

FORT. Why, yes, good! Do, an' we'll take her out together.

PRISCILLA (*aside*). And you too, Zek'l! Oh, you two bald-headed hypocrites!

FORT. Jewhittiker! but Priscilla will be surprised. Air ye shure she suspects nothin'?

McK. Oh, Oi took good care to kape her in the dark. She's as unsuspectin' av what's goin' on behind her back as a new-born choild.

PRISCILLA (*aside*). Oh, I can stand this no longer! (*dashing open the door and coming down. Aloud*) It is false! false! Base, perfidious man, I know all! (*strikes attitude.*)

FORT. (*aside to McKEEGAN*). She's heard all about the surprise ye intend givin' her, an' it seems to hev vexed her.

McK. (*aside*). Vexed! Hivin defin'd us from her anger, if she is only vexed now! (*aloud*) Priscilly, me own, what—

PRISCILLA. Do not advance another step, you monster! You—you human Mephistopheles! You—you miserable man! I hate you, and never want to see your face again! Oh, that my love should have had so shameful a return! (*puces stage, gesticulating frantically. FORTUNE and McKEEGAN keep puce on each side of her, vainly endeavoring to pacify her. She takes no notice of them*) Oh, what a fool I was to think that that miserable man loved me, when all the while I was but a mere dupe, a toy in his hands, to be tossed about at his will! Oh, let me but once lay hands on that shameless woman, and I'll scratch her eyes out! I'll show Helen Blazes what sort of a woman she has to deal with. Oh, my young life is ruined! ruined! Oh!

[*Exit, sobbing, R. McKEEGAN and FORTUNE continue to walk up and down as though PRISCILLA were still with them, then they stop and look at each other.*]

FORT. Larry McKeegan, yer a fool!

McK. Zeke, I know it. It come natheral to me. I was born that way!

FORT. Now, that woman is jest laborin' under some orful delusion, an' et's your duty, ez her husband, to find out what's wrong.

McK. But, Zeke, whin Priscilly is excited the divil himsilf couldn't rason wid her.

FORT. Larry, et's your duty to find out, an' the sooner the better.

McK. But, Zeke, ye don't know Priscilly; whin she's in one av her tantrums, begob, she's dangerous.

FORT. Larry McKeegan, kin it be possible that yer afraid of a weak, harmless woman? (*laughs. McKEEGAN assumes an air of injured innocence.*)

McK. Afraid, did ye say? Alderman McKeegan, av the tinth ward, afraid av a woman! (*forced laugh*) Ha, ha, ha! Ye make me laugh. Watch me now, while I beard the lioness in her den. (*goes toward door with assumed courage, whistling. At door he hesitates, looks back at ZEKE, who motions him on*) By the way, Zeke, before Oi forgit it, Oi've the best joke ye—

FORT. This is no time fur jokes; pacify yer wife first. Go along now!

McK. But, ye—(*ZEKE cuts him short by a motion*) Will, thin, since ther's no hilp for it, here goes! [*Sighs, dashes open door, and exit, R.*]

FORT. (*solus*). I declare to goodness gracious me, but wimmin is the

complexiest machines ever invented. (*knock at door, c.*) Hello, who may thet be? (*goes to door and opens it.*)

Enter RANKIN, C. D.

Howd'y do, stranger? What can I do fur ye?

RANKIN. Mr. Fortune, I believe?

FORT. Thet's me.

RANK. Mr. Fortune, my name is Rankin—Detective Rankin, of the Central Office, New York city. Allow me, without any further preliminary words, to enter upon the object of my visit. Mr. Fortune, for some time past I have been employed by the officers of the Mayville Savings Bank in shadowing an ex-convict, whom I suspected of the crime—one Ralph Douglas, an expert bank thief and forger. After a careful investigation of the facts in the case, and assisted by the confession of a former accomplice, there is no doubt in my mind that I have my man safely cornered. He is as slippery as an eel, however, and should he get wind of anything, all would be lost. Mr. Fortune, it is with your assistance that he must be entrappel.

FORT. With my assistance? I don't understand ye.

RANK. When I confide to you the name of my intended prisoner, you will be better able to comprehend me. Ralph Douglas, the bank thief and forger, and Gilbert Darkwood, the rich and respectable gentleman, are the same person!

FORT. Ye almost take my breath away with surprise; an' yit it oughtn't to, fur I know thet man to be the most black-hearted scoundrel on the face of this airth.

RANK. Your reasons for thinking so will be strengthened when you hear what I have to say further. But this is no place for such disclosures as I have to make; we detectives mistrust the very walls. Have you no more secluded room than this?

FORT. Why, yes; jest walk in ther; (*pointing L.*) ye can speak yer mind ther without fear of intrusion.

RANK. Very well; let us enter.

{Exeunt, L.

Enter, c., JACK. Comes down and sits at table.

JACK (*solus*). That is accomplished! To-night, in case we are driven from this shelter, there will be at least a roof to cover us, even though it be the poor-house roof. The poor-house! With what repugnance the very mention of that word fills me! Oh, that we should be driven to take such a step! (*lets head fall on his arm on table. Emotion.*)

Enter JESSIE, R.

JESSIE (*aside*). It seems to me I hear some one sobbing. (*sees JACK*) Jack! Great Heavens! how changed! Weeping! Poor fellow! poor fellow! (*calls*) Jack! Jack!

JACK (*looking up, slowly*). That voice! Jessie's! Am I dreaming? (*rises and looks vacantly about him, sees JESSIE*) Jessie! Is it possible? Oh, my loved one! (*embrace.*)

JESSIE. Jack, can it then indeed be true that you do not despise me?

JACK. How could such a dreadful thought have entered your head? True love, my darling, is an undying affection, not a mere butterfly fancy, changing with every caprice. I love you now as I loved you in those good old days gone past, and as I shall continue to love you for all time.

JESSIE. Jack, I do not deserve so noble, so true a love as yours.

JACK. You must not say that, pet. Why, darling, in my eyes you are worthy of the homage of a king. Ah, Jessie, it looks so natural to see you about again.

JESSIE. Jack, darling, we shall never part again; promise me that.

JACK. I pray God, never, little one!

JESSIE. I have so much to ask pardon for.

JACK. Not another word on that subject, Jess. Once for all, I have nothing to forgive; in my eyes you are entirely blameless. But come, let us find daddy, and gladden his old heart with the news that in this life Jessie Fortune and Jack Nelson will never more be parted.

[*Exeunt, L.*]

Enter, R., PRISCILLA and McKEEGAN, arm in arm.

McK. Ah, Priscilly, me loife, how could ye suspect me av bein' unthru to ye, when ye know I worship the very ground ye tread on.

PRISCILLA. Oh, Lawrence, darling, forgive my blind jealousy. But the thought that you loved another almost frenzied me.

McK. Say no more about it, Priscilly, me precious! Faith, it showed how much ye do care for me.

PRISCILLA. Oh, my Lawrence! (*arms around him.*)

McK. Oh, me lump of sugar! (*embrace*) Once more, me goddess! (*embrace*) An' now for the tiger, me queen! (*embrace.*)

PRISCILLA. And now promise oo little tootsy that oo'll never quarrel with her again.

McK. Wid all me heart, me little ducky!

PRISCILLA and McK. (*together.*) Never! Never! Never! (*business.*)

[*They retire up stage and exeunt, C.*]

Enter, L., FORTUNE, RANKIN, JACK, and JESSIE.

JACK. What you have told me, Mr. Rankin, is simply astounding. It seems well-nigh incredible that a man's villainy could devise so devilish a scheme as to cast the shadow of suspicion upon an innocent man to insure his own safety.

RANK. In a very few moments you will have sufficient proof of what I have said. In the meantime, do not forget my instructions; follow them implicitly, and leave the rest to me. (*takes out watch*) It is about time for Darkwood's appearance. (*goes to door, C.*) I will give Skinner the signal agreed upon. (*waves handkerchief*) He sees it! (*three whistles are heard*) He understands! But you have not a moment to lose, for here comes Darkwood down the road. I will be on hand at the proper moment.

[*Exit, R.*]

JACK. Jessie, to your room at once! (*exit JESSIE, L.*) And now to tear the mask of respectability from his villainous brow!

Enter, C., DARKWOOD, accompanied by two constables.

DARK. Mr. Fortune, I humbly beg your pardon for this intrusion, but a matter of much importance is the object of my call. Some months ago the community was horrified by the bold burglary of over forty thousand dollars from the vaults of the Mayville Savings Bank. You, Mr. Fortune, was one of the heaviest losers. It was a terrible blow to you. But much greater will be the shock when I tell you by whom you were reduced to abject poverty. Mr. Fortune, the man who caused

your ruin is he whom you love as a son. (*pointing to JACK*) There stands the viper you have nourished in your bosom, the scoundrel who robbed the Mayville Bank! Constables, do your duty! Arrest that man!

FORT. (*stepping between constables and JACK*). One minit, constables, one minit. Afore ye put that order into execution, I've a question to ask the Squar'.

DARK. (*aside*). What can the old fool be driving at?

FORT. S'posin' ye was a jedge, an' ther wus brought afore ye two men, one accused of stealing forty thousan' dollars, the other charged with tearin' a father's only darter from his side, causin' him the deepest misery and distress. Neow, honest, Squar', which would ye call the worst scoundrel?

DARK. I am at a loss to determine the relevancy of your question to the present occasion. You are wastin' valuable time, and—

FORT. Then ye refuse to answer?

DARK. Officers, once more I call upon you to do your duty. Arrest that man!

FORT. One minit, constables. *I'll* tell ye why he dasn't answer. The villain who stands ther darin' to accuse my boy Jack of a crime he never committed, is the despoiler of my home. Ther stands the coward who by his lyin' words enticed my darter Jess from her father's side!

Enter JESSIE, L.

DARK. It is false! false! How dare you?

JESSIE. It is true, as Heaven is my witness!

Enter RANKIN, R.

DARK. Jessie! Great Heaven! What can this mean?

RANK. It means, Gilbert Darkwood, Ralph Douglas, or whichever of your many aliases you prefer—it means that you have played your old game once too often, and have been caught napping.

DARK. (*aside*). Rankin, by all that's damnable!

RANK. It means, Ralph Douglas, that in endeavoring to work an innocent man's ruin, you have run your own neck into the noose. You are my prisoner, on the charge of robbing the Mayville Savings Bank.

Enter SKINNER, C.

DARK. (*aside*). Euchered, by Heaven! (*aloud*) Rankin, it is useless to deny that I have been a bad man in my day, and you can lay many a crime at my door, but before God, I am innocent of the crime you now charge me with. Yonder stands the real culprit; I swear it!

SKIN. (*coming down*). Gilbert Darkwood, ye lie, an' ye know it! You, and none other, are guilty of the crime ye are endeavoring to fix on this noble young fellow.

DARK. Betrayed, and by you, you scoundrel!

SKIN. Yes, Gilbert Darkwood, betrayed by me, yer tool, as ye thought! My revenge is complete!

RANK. You see, my fine gentleman, your little jig is danced—now to pay the fiddler.

DARK. (*aside*). Cornered at last, but not caught yet. My only hope lies in escape, and at once (*suddenly turns, pistol in hand. Aloud*) Stand aside, as you value your lives; I am desperate! (*pushes his way toward door. C.*)

RANK. (*pistol in hand*). In the name of the law, I command you to stand, or I fire!

DARK. Take that for an answer, you bloodhound! (*shoots. RANKIN shoots—a cry of pain escapes DARKWOOD—he staggers*) Curse you, I'm hit! (*drops on knees*) You've done for me this time, (*gasping*) Rankin—curse—ye! (*hand at throat*) Air! air! for God's sake. I'm choking—I—(*dies. RANKIN and constables kneel about him. Examination business. McKEEGAN and PRISCILLA rush in, c.*)

RANK. Mr. Fortune, God has taken justice into his own hands. Gilbert Darkwood will trouble you no more; he is dead!

ALL (*startled, sotto voce*). Dead! (*a slight pause, then SKINNER comes forward.*)

SKIN. Zeke Fortune, I've wronged ye ez never friend wronged friend before; but it was my cursed greed for gold that killed all other feelin's in me. I was possessed of a very devil. I kin never atone to ye for the wrong I did ye. But, for the sake of those many happy days we spent together ez brothers, kin ye forgive me?

FORT. 'Riah, ye ain't half ez bad ez ye think ye are. True it is, ye wronged me—wronged me cruelly—but ye've atoned for it nobly, and I forgive ye. (*shake hands*) My little gal is safe home ag'in, an' my boy Jack is proved innocent, as I allers knew he was, an' I hain't got the heart for any feelin' but joy."

* DARKWOOD.

* RANKIN.

** OFFICERS.

* FORTUNE. * SKINNER.

* JESSIE.

* PRISCILLA.

* JACK.

* McKEEGAN.

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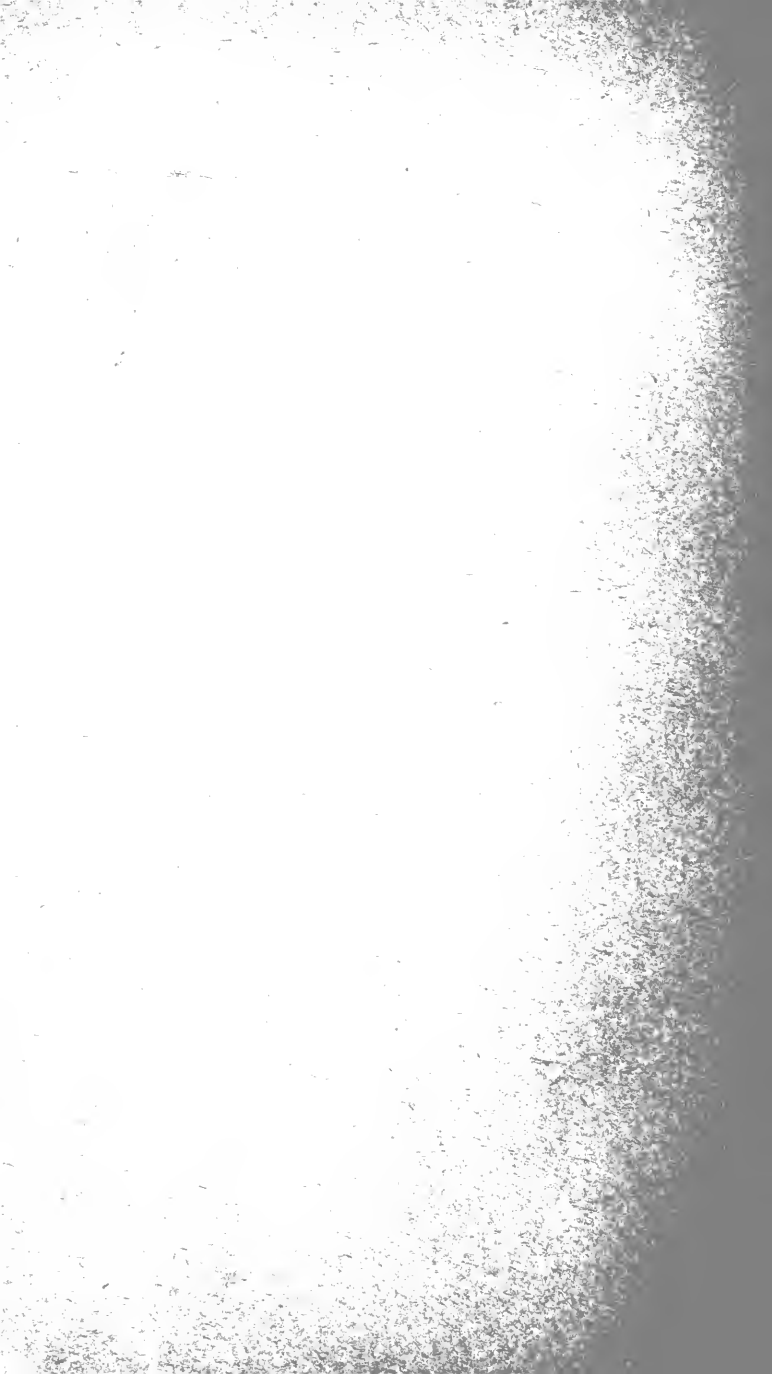
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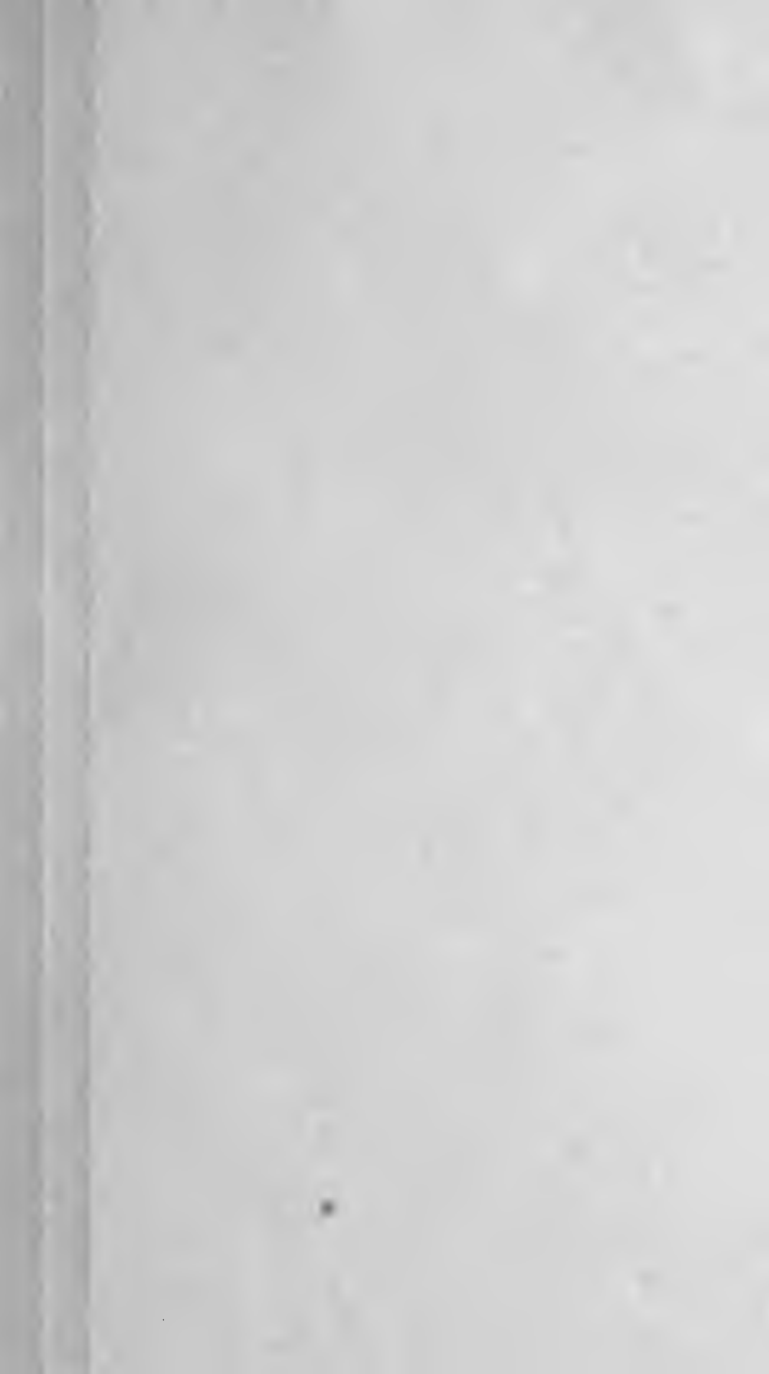
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